

July 2012

Supervisor FRONTLINE

A newsletter from the WA State Employee Assistance Program

Questions



I've observed employees who have heavy workloads resisting organizational change even when they are able to finally share their work burden or give up work they complained about for years. Why?



What's the most important leadership skill?

Answers



When employees face organizational change, resistance is often observed - even if they personally benefit from it. This resistance is usually not evidence of employees having personal problems, and it's usually not cause for alarm. Much resistance to change can be prevented by educating employees about how they may respond to it. This education can vary in its complexity. At a minimum, employees should understand that if organizational change calls for giving up something like job duties or prestige, changing an office location, or losing coworkers, then resistance can emerge. Even the loss of a familiar routine or pride in a specific task can create resistance or conflict. The common denominator, of course, is loss. It's not always possible to prepare employees for change, but your EAP can help or supplement organizational efforts at planning for change. This may include one-on-one counseling for groups of employees to help them examine personal reactions to change and loss, help them understand what's motivating resistance, help them confidentially with insecurities that undermine acceptance of the organization's change goals, and more. Talk to the EAP to learn more.



Deciding which leadership skill is most important is similar to determining what might be the most important bone in your body. It's difficult to say. Coping with complexity, being a strategic thinker, communicating well, developing teams, and being a good time manager are key skills, but for the most part, these skills are teachable. What's more meaningful is to ask, "what's the most important leadership trait?" A recent survey of leadership training experts by CareerBuilder.com and reported on by CNN found "honesty" to be the most important leadership trait. This was followed by focus and passion. Traits or personality characteristics are more difficult to acquire because they are aligned with values and personality. Are there any of your leadership skills about which you would like to feel better? Consider how the EAP might help you. Source: [CNN Living](#)

Frontline Supervisor

Questions



Can I create a work culture where employees are passionate and excited about what we do, or is this an accidental experience like “charisma” that’s out of my control? I would love to know the secrets of having a high-energy group of happy folks on the job.

Answers



You can set the stage for a passionate and positive work culture, but ensuring that it happens is less certain. There are accepted principles to consider, however. One common-sense idea is to hire passionate employees. (Their brilliance is important, but the energy they display is even more important.) Put them in key posts so they rub off on others. Use effective communication to help employees bond. Manage conflicts with efficiency, and you reap more positive outcomes from them. When difficult employees and employees with personal problems demonstrate performance issues, use the EAP to resolve these issues. There’s no other mechanism that can substitute for this resource. Passionate people in workplaces have fun because energy “spills” into spontaneity and authentic relationships. Be sure to recognize, praise, and reward those who go the extra mile. Keep your employees in touch with the big picture, the dream, and the goal “we’re all shooting for.” Finally, expect and promote a respectful workplace as relationships emerge and develop.

Washington State EAP Update

WA State EAP recognizes that managers, supervisors, and HR consultants have a critical role to support the productive functioning of an agency. One responsibility supervisors have is to ensure that all employees have the tools and skill sets to perform their jobs. In addition to providing training, supervisors also must intervene when they notice negative changes in the work environment.

An agency’s greatest asset is its human capital. Throughout the course of their careers, employees may experience situations that affect their capacity to perform their work duties. These experiences, while personal in nature, can manifest in the workplace as changes that affect performance, attendance, or conduct.

To support supervisors, EAP offers “Workplace Consultations.” Workplace Consultations provide an outsider’s perspective, fresh suggestions and options, and tools for intervening in a difficult situations. Managers that might have dealt with a similar situation in the past, but find that “it’s just a little more difficult” this time, can often benefit from a consultation. EAP can talk with employees before matters escalate and disrupt the workplace even more.

Workplace consultations address a variety of issues, such as potential legal or safety concerns, lowered productivity or morale, interpersonal conflicts, or health concerns. These issues may be new or long-standing work-team concerns.

The workplace consultation is a tool best used when changes first begin to appear. Early intervention on these issues is recommended as it conveys to all parties involved that the agency is paying attention and is committed to maintaining a productive and safe work environment. It also increases the odds of a positive outcome. Some supervisors call the EAP when they become aware of upcoming agency change and anticipate the impact on the workplace.

How do I schedule a workplace consultation? Simply call 360-753-3260 or statewide toll-free to 1-877-313-4455.

Visit EAP on the Web at www.hr.wa.gov/eap